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DE RUEHCV #0319 0662212  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
O 062212Z MAR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0752  
INFO RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

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header:  
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S E C R E T CARACAS 000319

SIPDIS

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2028  
TAGS: MCAP MOPS PGOV PREL CO VE  
SUBJECT: BRV DEPLOYMENT CONTINUES TO CREEP FORWARD

REF: CARACAS 308

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,  
for Reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: The deployment of Venezuelan troops to the areas near the border of Colombia continues with some movement being reported in local press at Fuerte Paramaracay in Valencia and Fuerte Mara in the border state of Zulia. This included, for the first time, reports of helicopter movements. There is no indication of the activation of any new units and the 42 Parachute Brigade still appears to remain in garrison. Available open source and sensitive reporting does not support the BRV's claims of 9,000 troops.  
END SUMMARY.

Getting a Lift

¶2. (S) Local press observed five heavy equipment transports (HETs) entering Fuerte Paramaracay in Valencia, home of the 41st Armored Brigade on the morning of March 5. Although they were not seen leaving, earlier photographs show that the HETs are capable of carrying either one AMX-30 main battle tank or two AMX-13 light tanks configured as armored fighting vehicles (AFVs). This would concur with other sensitive reporting that showed seven AFVs awaiting transport in Valencia. The press also reported and photographed a helicopter (possibly an MI-17 HIP or an MI-26 HALO) making two brief landings, presumably to pick up troops or command elements on March 5.

Front Pages From the Front

¶3. (S) Regional newspapers from the border state of Zulia ran photographs of a military column (presumably from the 1st Division in Fuerte Mara) made up of olive drab buses and trucks. The front page also carried a photograph of an MI-25 HIND gunship circling the highway interchange near La Chinita airport, which confirms sensitive reporting of a HIND. A contact at La Chinita airport told PolOff that the Venezuelan Air Force was paying to fuel the helicopters and not commandeering supplies.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Although not every troop movement can expect to be reported in the open press, available open source and sensitive reporting does not support the BRV's claims of 9,000 troops. END COMMENT.

DUDDY

=====CABLE ENDS=====